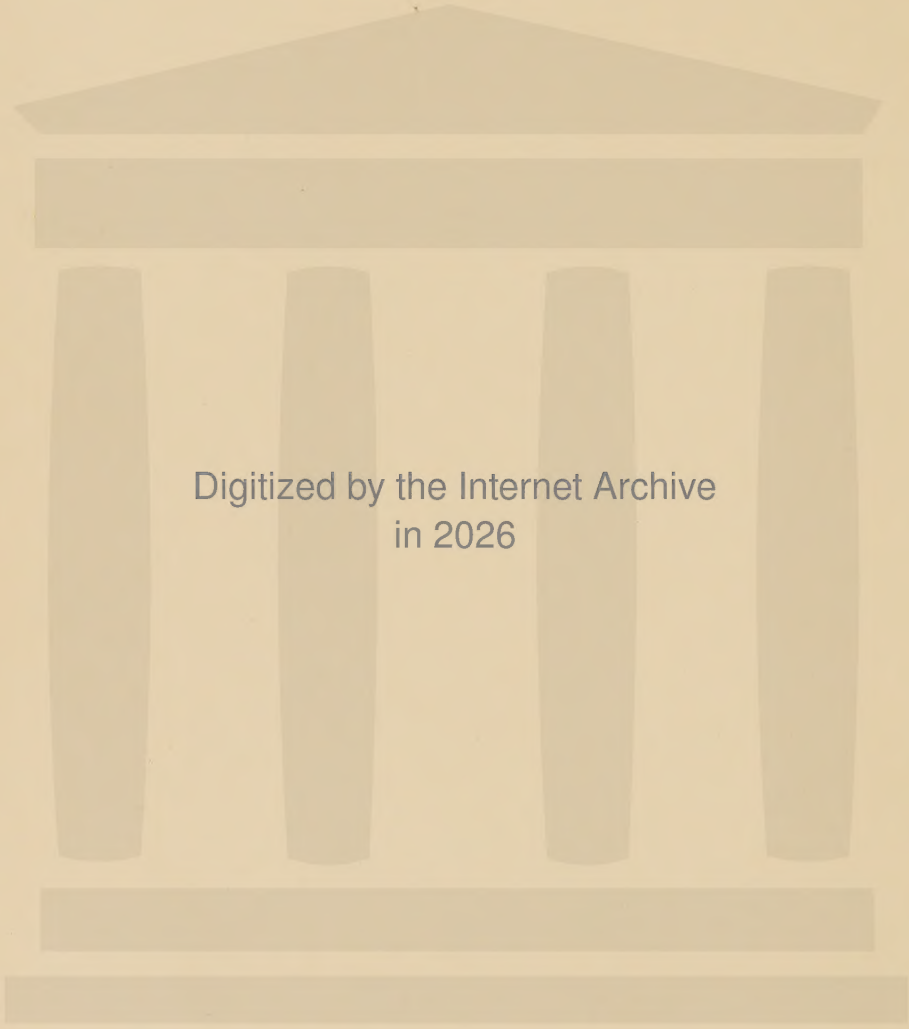

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days of | divine indiscipline

Text by JOHN MARTIN | Photographs by THOMAS BOUCHARD

autumn 1961

HUMPHREY-WEIDMAN COMPANY

ays of divine indiscipline

Tom Bouchard has been rummaging in his attic. What he has turned up among his half-forgotten antiquities is something far more titillating than any number of great-grandmothers' wedding veils, for it has values beyond sentiment and nostalgia. It is, to come to the point, his collection of photographs of the modern dance in its most formative, most creative and perhaps most exciting period—the '30's. There must be thousands of negatives—developed and undeveloped, printed and unprinted, over-exposed and double-exposed—for he was forever shooting at dancers whether they were aware of it or not.

There was something about the adventurousness of the modern dance that apparently struck a responsive chord in him, for it was frankly physical in basis, anti-hypocritical, iconoclastic, even impudent, and it was hell-bent on the evolving of functional methods of publishing human experience. Its technical equipment lagged behind its purposes just as his own did, for this was before the day when speed was built into photographic processes as a matter of course. In order to capture the time-shattering transitions of the body in movement he treated both camera and film to everything chemical and mechanical he could devise, and may possibly even have been reduced to praying over them.

The dance had inherited, not only from the traditional ballet but also from the "free," "aesthetic" dance, a prettiness that beclouded its truth, and to clear away this inertia was one of the besetting preoccupations of the modern dancers; how it looked was no longer the prime consideration, but what it managed to communicate. Bouchard went along with this as far as it went and much further. He cared very much how it looked, indeed, but he insisted that it should look as unpretty as possible, per-

haps just as a matter of defiance. At any rate, he was bound and determined to capture every unflattering, off-guard moment and relish it into perpetuity.

In the years of the Bennington College school and festival in the mid-thirties, he haunted the campus, the classrooms, the State Armory where the performances were given, and was forever popping out from behind trees, or posts, or canvas flats, with his impish eye and his leering lens, like a Pan Eulenspiegel. Much of what he succeeded in recording there and elsewhere was strictly unofficial; if he had submitted every shot for approval, no dancer, however dedicatedly modern, could have done other than veto them through sheer self-respecting personal vanity.

But what a record it proved to be, and who among the same dancers today would hesitate to endorse it with enthusiasm, vanity or no vanity! It is a record of vital, fecund years, of which nobody could but be proud. Being touched himself with madness, he recognized and perpetuated the madness of the artists in their state of possession and of the art itself.

Clearly no art can exist, Peter-Pan-like, in a perpetual condition of wonderment and divine indiscipline, in a state of permanent adolescence, as it were. Yet growing up has its sinister aspects. If it is a process of acquiring wisdom, with method and moderation and balance in all their

MARTHA GRAHAM AND COMPANY IN PRIMITIVE MYSTERIES

HANYA HOLM COMPANY IN A CRY RISES IN THE LAND

seductive beauty, it is also an unobstructable avenue toward death, where method becomes inertia, moderation simply the absence of passion, balance a mere suspension of equal ponderosities, an unsuspected conspiracy of negation.

Today the modern dance in many, perhaps most, of its manifestations is grown up. In some cases it has looked with the clear perspective of maturity at the results of a previous cycle of its eternal past and sought peace in the bosom of the classic tradition. In other and stubborner cases it has pushed on to the procuring of peace in classicisms of its own evolving, all of them personal, all of them different (hence, with a belligerence that actually denies peace).

Here and there, however, new shoots are appearing out of the old roots, and there are young green omens of another free and rebellious adolescence. The cycle never ceases, for the modern dance is not a tangible organism that is subject to decay but an eternal state of mind that must perpetually renew itself in the race's merciless insistence upon survival and progression. Perhaps a new Bouchard will arise

with comparable vision and obstreperousness to pin it down to uncontradictable diagnosis. If so, it will be lucky.

What the present Bouchard has pinned down is immeasurably precious. He has caught the transiencies of the heroic and maenadic femaleness of Helen Tamiris; of Hanya Holm as a creature of earth and order and unanticipated frenzy; of Esther Junger with her towering passion and her conscious animal kinship; of Doris Humphrey with her dainty femininity and behind it a strength and a power of organization to move mountains; of Charles Weidman with his sublime idiocy mocking at the false and pretentious, or sometimes merely mocking for the beauty of mockery; of Martha Graham, the elemental fury self-armored in a pregnant placidity; of half a hundred then youngsters, whom we know now as oldsters, among whom José Limón was already a vigorous figure of romantic affirmation, and Sybil Shearer had begun to show the signs of the incipient madness that was to elevate her to the heights.

No; here is no great-grandmother's wedding veil; but perhaps it possesses a nostalgia of its own.

The Matriarch is the very personification of destroying love . . . her conception and performance of the character are fantastic and brilliant . . . she becomes something of a witch out of the minds of the brothers Grimm . . . for all her perversity and her violence, she remains a figure of great dignity

she has succeeded in holding within the frame of her characteristically feminine style, a vibrant kind of strength

DORIS HUMPHREY AND CHARLES WEIDMAN IN RUDEPOEMA

DORIS HUMPHREY IN THEATRE PIECE

HUMPHREY-WEIDMAN COMPANY

There is not an ensemble anywhere in western Europe that is its peer; for it has the rare combination of two first-rate "stars," an unusually strong second line of soloists, impeccable teamwork, and one of the most gifted choreographers of the day

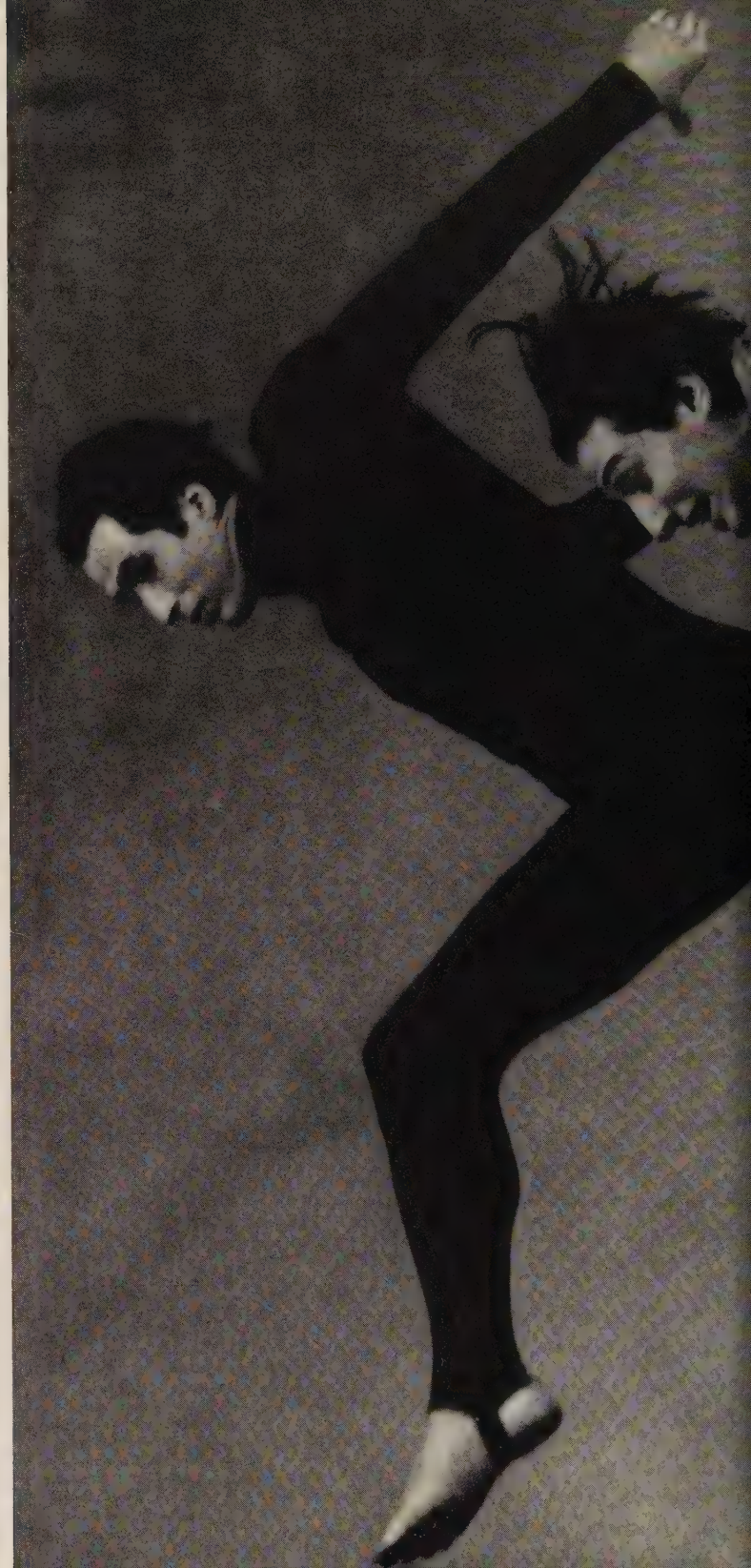
DORIS HUMPHREY

CHARLES WEIDMAN IN NEW DANCE

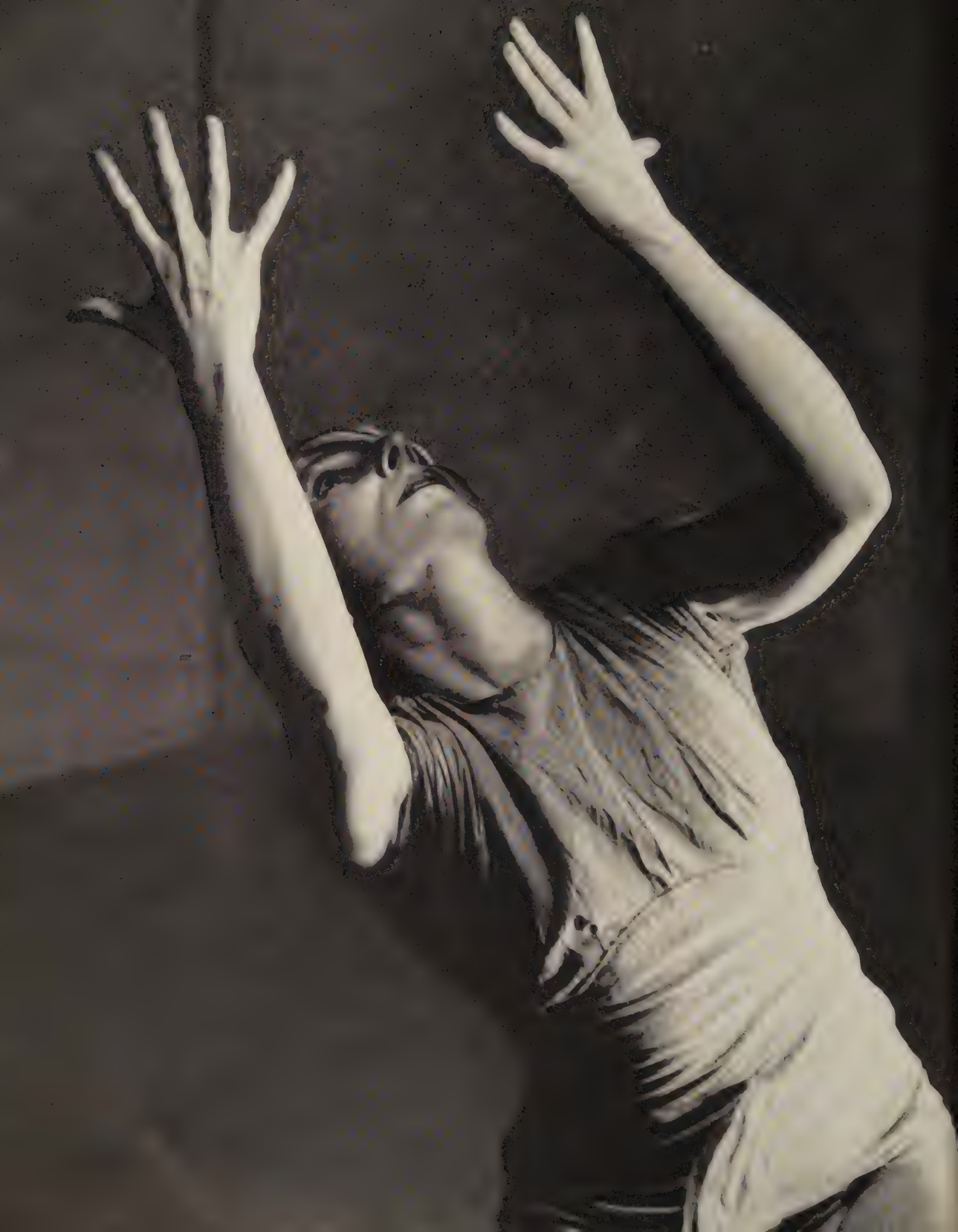
Indeed his comedy obtains its vitality from the penetration with which it focuses upon human foibles and the adroitness with which it points at them the finger of genial scorn

CHARLES WEIDMAN

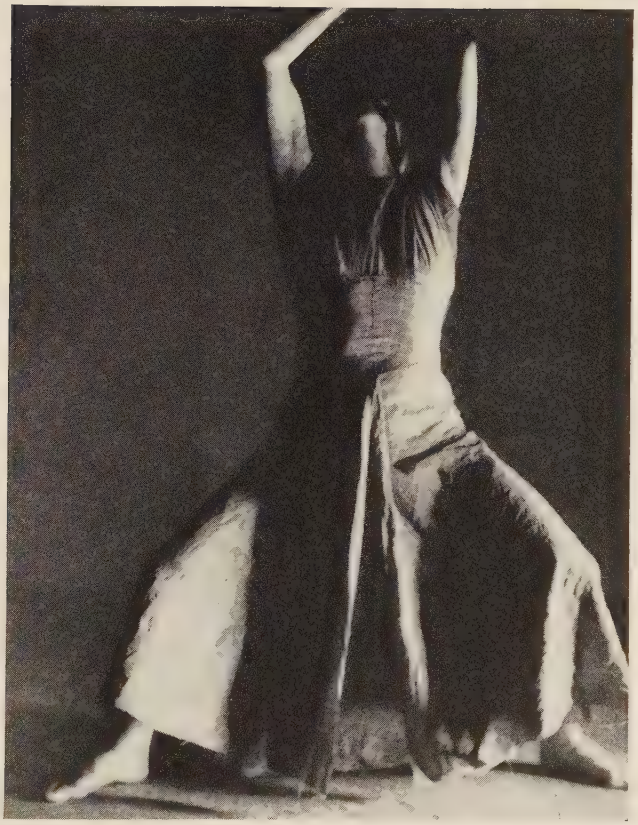
[NEW DANCE] *combines an almost primitive drive with a formal graciousness which, though it takes nothing away from its force, gives it in addition a certain poise*



JOSÉ LIMÓN AND LEE SHERMAN IN NEW DANCE



[TREND] *a kind of heroic choric drama in which for words are substituted movement and a kind of dramatic expressionism*



HANYA HOLM IN TREND

Her designs appear in great sweeping dimensions, developing out of their own content, unhurried and unfaltering

HANYA HOLM

HANYA HOLM COMPANY IN TREND

[HER DANCING] *is essentially religious in its character . . . it concerns itself with the individual and his contacts with the forces of the universe*

MARTHA GRAHAM IN A STUDY FOR AN UNFINISHED DANCE

sex,
art pride,
terror and
ll frenzy

MARTHA GRAHAM IN STUDIES FOR AN UNFINISHED DANCE

HELEN TAMIRIS IN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE MASS

HELEN TAMIRIS AND COMPANY IN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE MASS

HELEN TAMIRIS COMPANY IN WALT WHITMAN SUITE

She is a free-moving, wide-ranging creature, who does not cage easily; her moods are spacious . . . such free and flowing beauty of movement

HELEN TAMIRIS COMPANY IN WALT WHITMAN SUITE

the declaration of an entirely subjective delight in the dynamic actualities of the present

HELEN TAMIRIS IN DIRGE

His appearance and bearing are magnificent, and he is possessed of a dignity and a graciousness that bespeak his respect for both his art and his audience

JOSÉ LIMÓN

He moves like a fine animal, with all the animal's characteristic alertness behind even his moments of greatest reticence

[SHE IS] *totally without preciosity, and has a warmth and vitality . . . Here is an instrument alive in every fibre, fluent, controlled, eloquent*

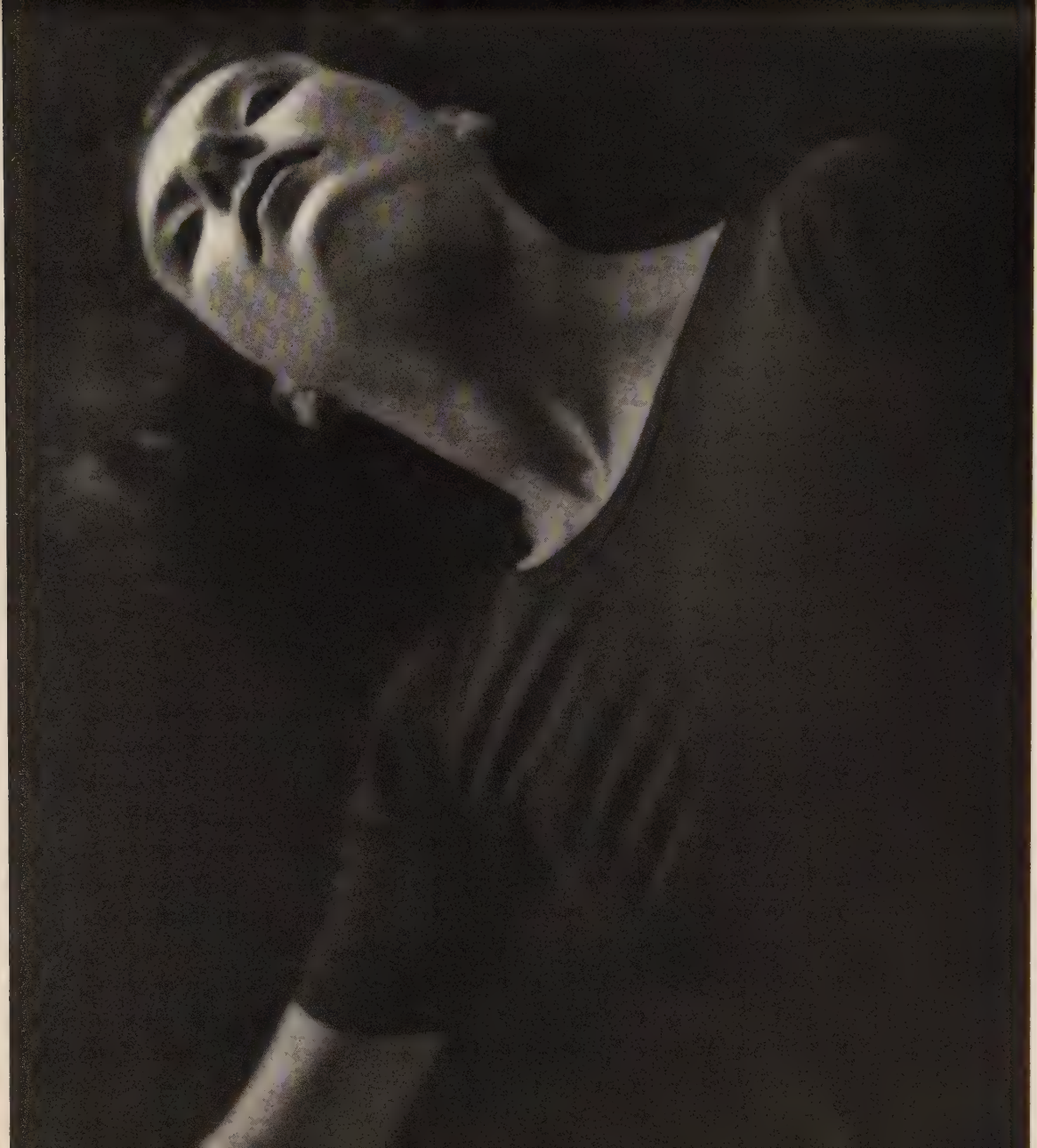
ESTHER JUNGER IN BERCEUSE

ESTHER JUNGER IN ANIMAL RITUAL

Her movement has great beauty simply as movement, but she never exhibits it for its own sake. Its breadth and fluency are always directed toward the externalization of inner purposes

ESTHER JUNGER

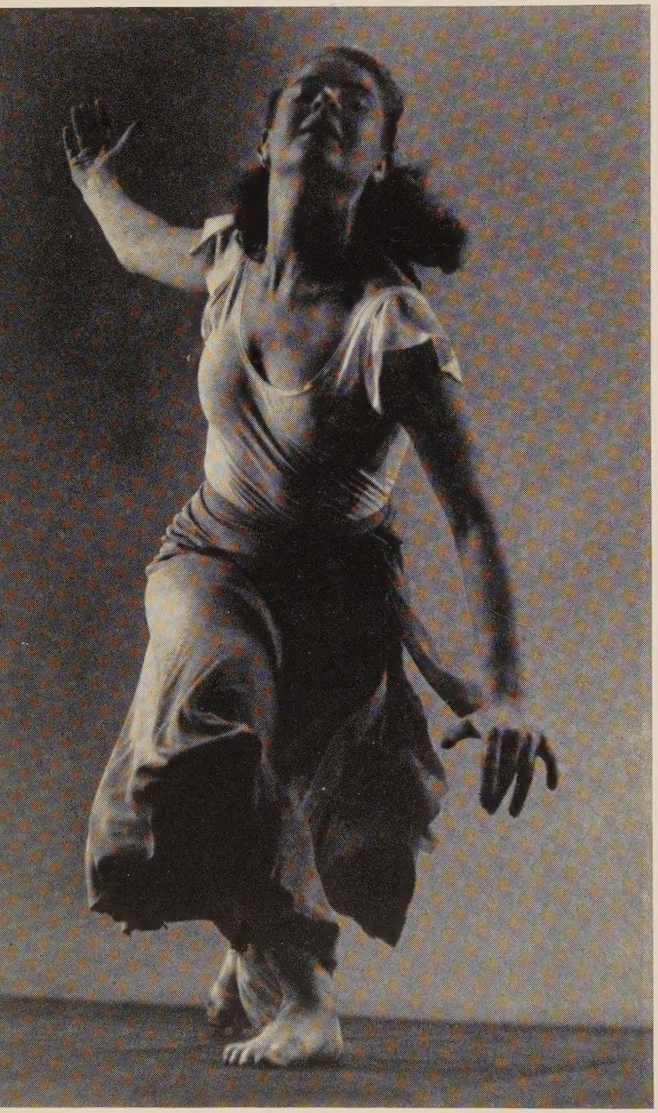
ESTHER JUNGER IN ANIMAL RITUAL



What she has to say is utterly personal; it is an illumination of a sensitive artist's reaction to nature, to foolish and pitiful human beings, to the futilities and to the ultimate hopefulness of living

SYBIL SHEARER

A fine, strong, positive lyrical affirmation . . . subjective almost to the degree that the surrealists attain . . . discarding formal principles that have become standard by inertia



KATHERINE LITZ

MARTHA GRAHAM, a tenth generation American, was a student of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn and a leading member of their company until 1923. Thereafter she worked independently, first as a solo concert artist and then as choreographer and dancer with her own group. She has been the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships and a number of important commissions for choreography to original musical scores. With her repertory company she has recently toured Europe and the Far East and has made several films. A New York concert season is planned for early 1962.

HARRIETTE ANN GRAY danced in the Humphrey-Weidman Company, where she was frequently partnered by José Limón. She has been dance director at the Perry-Mansfield School of Theatre in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, for many summers, and has headed the dance department at Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri, since 1956.

HANYA HOLM was born in Germany and studied there at the Dalcroze school and with Mary Wigman. In 1931 she established a branch of the Wigman school in New York. She gave her first American concert in 1937. Since then her major choreography has been for Broadway musicals, including *Kiss Me Kate* and *My Fair Lady*, but she continues to teach in her own New York studio and to direct summer concerts at Colorado College.

DORIS HUMPHREY studied first with Mary Wood Hinman in Chicago and then with Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn in California. After ten years with Denishawn—the latter ones spent as a featured soloist—she left the organization in 1927 to form an independent company with Charles Weidman. The group had regular concert seasons in New York and made frequent, nation-wide tours.

ss Humphrey retired as a dancer in 1945, but ntinued to work as a teacher and choreographer, rving also as artistic director of the José Limón mpany and the Juilliard Dance Theatre until her ath in 1958. Her book on choreography, *The Art Making Dances,* was published posthumously.

THER JUNGER, a New Yorker of Austrian scent, was a student of Bird Larson, a pioneer perimenter in the realm of natural dance move- ent. Miss Junger made her solo debut in New York 1930 and was awarded a fellowship at the Ben- ington School of the Dance in 1937. In addition her concert work, she appeared in musicals d on television. No longer dancing, she lives in lifornia.

SÉ LIMÓN, a Mexican by birth, came to New rk to study painting, but soon entered the Hum- rey-Weidman school and joined its company in 32. Since 1945 he has headed his own group, rforming a repertory of works composed by him- f and Miss Humphrey. The company, based in w York, has toured throughout South America d Europe. Mr. Limón also teaches and choreo- phs for students of the Dance Department of the lliard School of Music.

ATHERINE LITZ, a leading member of the mphrey-Weidman Company, left the group in 1940's to study with Sybil Shearer. Besides ing independent concerts, she has danced in sicals. She is currently teaching in New York, ere she also choreographs and dances with her n company.

BIL SHEARER was born in Toronto, danced h the Humphrey-Weidman Company, and made her solo debut in New York in 1941. She now has her own studio near Chicago, where she choreographs for her concert group. She dances only infrequently outside of her own theatre.

HELEN TAMIRIS studied interpretive dancing with Irene Lewisohn and appeared with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. She formed her own company in 1931. After a period of directing dances for such Broadway musicals as *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Plain and Fancy,* she has recently resumed concert work, choreographing for her new company, which has her husband, Daniel Nagrin, as co-director.

CHARLES WEIDMAN, another product of the Denishawn school, performed and choreographed in the group he directed with Doris Humphrey until 1945. He has since had companies of his own, including an all-male ensemble. He has also taught extensively and staged a number of musicals.

The Bennington School of the Dance opened in Vermont in 1934 and continued to hold summer sessions in modern dance until World War II. The school sponsored an annual festival for which members of the faculty performed pieces from their repertories and choreographed new works. Among the resident artist-teachers at Bennington were Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. Some of their students composed their first dances at Bennington.

After the War, the summer project was revived at Connecticut College in New London, where Miss Graham and José Limón now head the faculty. Sybil Shearer, Helen Tamiris, and Charles Weidman have appeared on the programs of the annual American Dance Festival at New London.